

Subject Leadership and School Improvement

Hugh Busher and Alma Harris



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Hugh Busher and Alma Harris
with Christine Wise



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Contents

<i>Series Editor's Preface</i>	v
<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
1 Introduction	1
Part I Strategic Direction and Development of the Subject Area	
2 Managing Change within the Subject Area	17
3 Managing Federal and Confederate Departments <i>Christine Wise</i>	32
4 Leading and Co-ordinating Diffuse Subject Areas	43
Part II Teaching and Learning	
5 Being a Curriculum Leader: Helping Colleagues to Improve Learning <i>Christine Wise</i>	59
6 Improving Teaching and Learning within the Subject Area	72
7 Developing Professional Networks: Working with Parents and Communities to Enhance Students' Learning	89
Part III Leading and Managing Staff	
8 The Subject Leader as a Middle Manager	105
9 Cultures of Leadership and Professional Autonomy: Managing Self, Developing Others	120
10 Professional Development and Action Research	137

Part IV Efficient and Effective Deployment of Staff and Resources

11	Planning Development and Resource Utilisation to Improve Students' Learning	155
12	Working with Support and Supply Staff to Improve School Performance	169
13	Subject Leadership and School Improvement	183
	<i>References</i>	197
	<i>Index</i>	211

Series Editor's Preface

The importance of subject leadership is now recognised. This book, which explores fully the research on subject leadership, sets an agenda for subject leaders which is challenging but provides guidance on all aspects of the role. It is legitimised because it is so profoundly based on practice with a clear understanding of the different environments in secondary and primary schools and the distinctive subject cultures within those phases.

The authors recognise the unique nature of different subjects, some with clearer accountability processes such as English in the secondary school and others with a more diffuse and complex cross-curricular role such as Special Educational Needs. In primary schools the role is arguably more complex because most teachers have responsibility for subject leadership possibly across Key Stages, but without the authority of responsibility and status. The distinctive role of the subject leader is therefore problematic. This book addresses these issues sensitively.

Hugh Busher and Alma Harris have, for many years, developed a thorough understanding of what actually happens in schools through their own research and through working with teachers. This enormously strengthens the quality of the analysis and guidance that is provided because it is so soundly based on evidence. They have a thorough understanding of international research and current government policy developments in the UK, which embeds their presentation in a broader perspective.

There is clear recognition of the importance of monitoring and evaluation, which is now widely recognised, but here placed in a context which enhances understanding. They have high expectations of subject leaders with the central focus on teaching and learning. There is encouragement of subject leaders to lead and manage staff, including support staff, a complex and difficult role, to understand the department culture, but also to reach outside the narrower school confines to work with parents and to develop professional networks.

Since this book is about subject leadership it will be of immense value not only for subject leaders, but also for all those working with

subject leaders, particularly teachers who might aspire to the role, but also senior management. The importance of subject leadership to school improvement is now recognised as central. This is a particularly timely, high quality and significant contribution to the BEMAS Series.

Professor Harry Tomlinson, 2000

Preface

Curriculum and subject leadership in schools has gained substantial attention from both researchers and policy-makers over the last decade as they have come to recognise the centrality of this role in bringing about improvement in teaching and learning to meet the changing needs of students. Since 1998, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has reinforced the importance of subject leadership in school improvement, proposing a clearer definition of successful leadership at this level of an education organisation's hierarchy. This is set out in its national subject leader standards (NPQSL) and is reflected in the four main sub-sections of the book.

This book reflects critically on the work of subject and curriculum leaders especially in schools in England and Wales, i.e. within central government's policy framework of the Local Management of Schools, the National Curriculum, nationally directed school inspections, and the Teacher Training Agency. This sets the context for the book in five different dimensions, which all interact:

- a macro level of central and local government policy initiatives;
- a meso level of school policy constructed by senior staff and governors;
- a micro level of subject area activity and interpersonal relationships;
- a personal and interpersonal level of effective practice by subject leaders;
- and a multi-faceted conceptual framework of leadership, management of change and development, educational and social values, and successful professional teacher practice.

Subject leaders are part of the realm of middle management in education organisations, as well as having to be technical experts in their subject specialist fields. As leaders they have to manage the impact of these five dimensions on the work of students and staff in their subject area. As such they are key channels of and hold the keys to lines of communication in the structure of a school organisation. Within their areas they have to enthuse, monitor and

develop staff and student performance; plan and sustain curriculum development; make appropriate resource allocations; and represent the views of senior staff to their team colleagues.

Subject leaders also have to manage the external environments of their areas, whether these are internal to a school – for example the actions and policies of senior staff and of colleagues in other subject areas – or located in the local and national communities which a school serves. To perform effectively in these arenas, subject leaders have to engage with the politics of school life as advocates for their areas. They also have to represent their areas to wider constituencies and agencies outside a school, such as parents and the business community. There is also a professional part of the external environment of schools which subject leaders have to monitor. This is the epistemological, pedagogical and professional framework of their subject areas.

As well as maintaining the effective functioning of existing educational and organisational processes, subject leaders have to work with their colleagues to bring about change and improvement to teaching and learning in their subject areas in order to meet an ever changing environment. Changes can be triggered by government legislation, by the changing policies of a headteacher or a school's governors, by demographic variations in a school's pupil intake, or by developments in knowledge in their subject areas.

In order to sustain a process of continual improvement, subject leaders and their colleagues have to engage in a rigorous and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of practice in their area. This involves them considering to what extent existing processes of teaching, learning, assessment, management and resourcing are meeting the needs of students and the educational values of the subject area and the school, and how those needs and values can be met more successfully. Evaluation may be carried out against pre-defined targets in the manner encouraged in Total Quality Management. However, control of evaluation within this framework tends to lie with those who set the targets, often senior or powerful staff within a school or even based outside it, such as inspectors licensed by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). An alternative approach to evaluation, which locates ownership of the problem solving process with the subject area team, albeit within the organisational framework of the school, is a process of action enquiry or action research. It is this latter approach which is more likely to promote effective social cohesion in a subject area team and coherent and effective team approaches to improving practice.

Two key processes for bringing about change within a subject area are for subject leaders to foster a wide range of knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning, and to moderate the culture of the team

or subject area community towards one of inclusivity and empowerment. An aspect of the former is promoting a wider repertoire of approaches to teaching. Peer observation and mentoring by the subject leader can help this, encouraging staff and students to reflect critically on their practice in order to promote development rather than to secure blame. An aspect of the latter is helping colleagues make public their shared and disparate professional educational values and beliefs in order to create an agreed but tolerant collegial culture which encourages learning by students, staff and parents alike.

What is particular, then, about leading and managing the middle realm of education organisations is the person-oriented nature of the subject leader role. At the core of this role is a political process of co-operation, conflict and compromise based on a tangled web of personal and professional beliefs and values about the nature of education in a particular subject area and the appropriateness of particular social relationships between teachers, students, parents, and leaders in educational institutions. People occupying this ground experience structural, cultural and individual pressures and perspectives from their colleagues, their students and other members of their role sets which interact with each other and influence their professional practice as a subject leader.

On account of the many tensions and dimensions to managing in and from the middle of education organisation hierarchies, Blandford (1997) suggests that only those people who can handle such tensions successfully can be effective middle managers. As Busher and Harris (1999) point out, to sustain effective practice in such circumstances, let alone bring about relevant change, requires subject leaders to be adroit politicians in the micro-sphere of the school, wielding a variety of sources of power and influence effectively, if subtly, to achieve preferred educational and social values which are believed to meet the best interests of their students.

The intention of this book is to be of interest not only to subject leaders and curriculum co-ordinators, to help them reflect rigorously on their practice, but also to those responsible for supervising them, such as headteachers and school governors, to whom they are accountable within their institutions. We hope it provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding the work of subject leaders. However, in writing it we have become aware of the range of unanswered questions which it has raised and which need further research before there can be said to be a detailed understanding of the role of subject leaders and the realm of middle management in primary and secondary schools in England and Wales.

Hugh Busher, 2000

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1

Introduction

Curriculum and subject leadership in schools has recently gained substantial attention from both researchers and policy-makers in England and Wales as key post-holders for bringing about change and improvement. Work by Harris *et al.* (1995), Sammons *et al.* (1997) and Harris (1998) as well as that by Siskin (1994) and by Bell and Ritchie (1999) has pointed to the importance of this role. The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has reinforced the importance of subject leadership in school improvement in England and Wales in the late 1990s by proposing a new measure of such leadership competence through the creation of national subject leader standards National Professional Qualification for Subject Leaders – NPQSL (TTA, 1998). These have provided a framework for the routine evaluation of the quality of subject leadership and subject areas in schools (OFSTED, 1999).

Research evidence on school improvement underlines the importance of focusing change efforts at different levels within the organisation (Fullan, 1991; Hopkins *et al.*, 1994; 1997a). The importance of school-level, subject-area level and classroom-level change has been shown to be essential in successful school improvement programmes (e.g. Hopkins *et al.*, 1996; Hopkins and Harris, 1997). Similarly empirical evidence in the field of school effectiveness points to the importance of mobilising development at school, departmental and classroom level. Recent research has shown that a substantial proportion of the variation in effectiveness among schools is due to variation within schools and has emphasised the importance of exploring differential effectiveness, particularly at the level of the subject area (Fitzgibbon, 1992; Scheerens, 1992; Creemers, 1994; Sammons *et al.*, 1997).

The largest study of differential school effectiveness in the UK highlighted the importance of differences between departments as explanation for differences in school performance (Sammons *et al.*, 1997). This research provided evidence that both schools and departments are differentially effective with pupils of different abilities and of different social and ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, the study

suggested a need to reconceptualise school leadership more broadly to include leadership at middle-management level. However, as Glover *et al.* (1998) have argued, the distinction between middle and senior management remains blurred and demarcations of leadership functions are still not adequately delineated or defined.

The policy context

Since the mid-1980s in the UK there has been increasing central government control over core aspects of the education process in schools, especially over the curriculum and over teachers' practice. The former can be traced through the implementation of a National Curriculum since 1988, under the Education Reform Act 1988, with various subsequent revisions in the mid-1990s (see, for example, Chitty, 1993; Simkins *et al.*, 1992). This control has been strengthened by the introduction of national tests for students in schools in England and Wales, the results of which have been published as national league tables since the mid-1990s.

This policy thrust has to be understood in its international contexts. Since the early 1980s there has been an emerging international orthodoxy about the importance of the relationships between education and economic growth that is enshrined in statements and policies put in place by, amongst other institutions, the World Bank, the IMF and the OECD (Ball, 1999). This orthodoxy emphasises the centrality of the human factor in processes of production, viewing the skills and qualifications of workers as critical to the effective performance of businesses and countries (Taylor *et al.*, 1997, quoted in Ball, 1999). In this framework, schools and colleges are perceived by governments as the key agencies for creating an adequately skilled workforce to boost national economic performance, with all the social consequences that that implies. In Britain it has led central governments during the last decade of the twentieth century to want to create a 'world class education system' (Barber and Sebba, 1999: 184) – whatever other agenda they have been pursuing coincidentally to impose greater control over public sector professional workers, either through the 'discipline' of market economics or through tightening central government regulation.

The increase in central government control over education in England and Wales is also perceptible in its approach to teachers' practice. This can be traced through the enactment of different legislation in England and Wales since the mid-1980s. Since then central government has asserted ever tighter control over the standards of training for new teachers, gradually taking power away from provider

institutions such as universities and colleges of education. The introduction of teacher appraisal in principle in 1986, and in practice in 1991, shows a growing concern by central government to define effective teaching and to shape teachers' professional development to meet these precepts. The introduction of OFSTED inspections of schools since 1993 in England and Wales, with their emphasis on evaluating classroom practice and school management, confirmed central government's intention to be the key definer of standards for teacher practice and for school organisational practice.

As part of this attempt to define standards of practice, the TTA, a central government agency, has, since 1995, set out to define not only the curriculum for the initial training of teachers, but the standards for serving teachers too. In 1997 it launched the national standards for headteachers, building on an earlier initiative for training newly appointed headteachers, the HEADLAMP scheme (see, for example, Busher and Paxton, 1997). In the Standards and Framework Education Act 1998 it was made clear that all teachers who wished to be appointed as headteachers after 2002 would have to achieve a nationally validated qualification based on these standards, the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH). Both Ouston (1998) and Gunter (1999) interpret this as evidence of a strong centralist tendency by the UK government to assert its definition of effective teachers over previously held professional definitions.

In 1998, to complement the national standards for headteachers, the TTA launched, but did not immediately implement, National Standards for Subject Leaders (NPQSL) and National Standards for Advanced Skills Teachers. The purpose of these standards is to encourage headteachers and subject leaders to become effective by raising the performance of student achievement and learning to levels prescribed by central government. Fielding (1999a) points out how such an approach emphasises the importance of organisational structures rather than the needs of students and teachers working in them. He questions the impact such a depersonalised approach – with its emphasis on control (performance to standards set by distant authorities) – is likely to have on students trying to develop themselves as part of a process of education, especially those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds who are already questioning the power imbalances in society.

These standards assume that schools, like commercial businesses, can be run largely on rational technicist lines. As Ball (1999: 197) explains: 'What is happening within [central government's] ensemble of policies is the modelling of the internal and external relations of schooling and public service provision more generally upon those of

commercial, market institutions.' Fielding (1999b) doubts the extent to which practices can be transferred without modification from commercial business to public sector service industries such as education. He also questions the extent to which the particular model of commercial leadership and management being presented to the public services can actually be considered effective even within a commercial milieu. Work by authors such as Hodgkinson (1991) and Sergiovanni (1994a) suggests that a much stronger attention to the moral and value dimensions of leadership is necessary than this technicist model suggests if organisations are to be run successfully. Blase and Anderson (1995), among others, suggest that a closer understanding of political processes within organisations is necessary, which this model largely ignores.

On the other hand, early evaluations of the National Headteacher Qualification (NPQH) scheme, a parallel and implemented model of leadership standards to that of NPQSL, suggest that it may meet the generic needs of headteachers in a variety of schools (Gunter, 1999), but leave unresolved some key issues. For example, Cubillo (1998) raises questions about the extent to which the assessment processes acknowledge the gendered nature of experience which male and female headteacher applicants have. Johnson and Castelli (1998) express concern that the qualification processes pay little attention to the spiritual and moral values that some headteachers may hold. Gunter (1999) herself suggests that the assessment processes for the qualification fail to take account of the political, moral and cultural dimensions which lie at the core of headteacher leadership in practice.

The national standards for subject leaders outline what the TTA (1998) perceived as the role and function of these office-holders in primary and secondary schools. These were categorised into four sections:

- 1) Strategic direction and development of the subject.
- 2) Teaching and learning.
- 3) Leading and managing staff.
- 4) Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources.

These categories reflect much of the work that curriculum co-ordinators in primary schools and heads of department in secondary schools might have been expected to carry out since the Education Reform Act 1988, and the implementation of teacher appraisal in 1991 and regular school inspections since 1994. They reflect a considerable shift in focus in the role of such office-holders from that of a leading professional amongst colleagues to middle-ranking manager. Wise (1999) developed Hughes' (1976) model for headteachers and applied

it to subject leaders. This draws on the distinction between subject leaders being chief executives, emphasising their managerial role, or leading professionals, emphasising the curriculum, staff development and pupil care aspects of their role. The emphasis on one or other has considerable implications for the cultures which subject leaders might construct with their subject area colleagues. Only the latter has so far been shown to be consonant with effective departments (Harris, 1998) and effective schools (Stoll and Fink, 1998).

Leadership from the middle

One of the fundamental findings of research in school effectiveness and school improvement is the powerful impact of leadership on processes of successful organisational practice. Research findings from diverse countries and different school contexts draw similar conclusions (e.g. Van Velzen *et al.*, 1985; Ainscow *et al.*, 1994; Hopkins *et al.*, 1994; Stoll and Fink, 1996). Essentially, schools that are effective and have the capacity to improve are led by headteachers who make a significant and measurable contribution to the effectiveness of their staff.

The work of UK researchers, such as Harris *et al.* (1996), Sammons *et al.* (1997) and Harris (1998), suggests that subject leaders can make a difference to performance in their subject areas in much the same way as headteachers contribute to overall school performance. This subject area sphere of influence has been termed the 'realm of knowledge' because of the importance of the subject boundary (Siskin, 1994). At this level too there is a major possibility of influencing whole-school development. Huberman (1990: 5) states: 'From the artisan's logic, I would rather look to the department as the unit of collaborative planning and execution. In a secondary school this is where people have concrete things to tell one another and where the contexts of instruction actually overlap.' These subject areas and, in secondary schools, subject departments are shaped by the cultures which subject leaders create.

An important insight from political and cultural perspectives on school improvement is that individual people matter. This acknowledges the humanity of people as they struggle to improve schools in complex sociopolitical contexts. Greenfield and Ribbins (1993) describe such individual perspectives as phenomenological. School organisations, like communities (Sergiovanni, 1994b), are made up of individual people who each have their particular agenda. It becomes the job of leaders and managers in schools and colleges to combine the individual agenda of staff and students in the service of the agreed

common aims and goals of the institution. The teacher does this in the classroom with students, as much as a school's site supervisor does it with cleaning staff, or a subject leader or headteacher does it with the staff of a subject area or the staff of a whole school.

Creating social cohesion is not an easy job for subject leaders. Although different leadership styles are likely to affect colleagues' performances, the influences of leadership will be mediated by other factors, not least those values and perspectives held by other members of a subject area.

People create their own individual meanings for each social event or action in which they engage. Thus for every aspect of teaching or learning or involvement in school organisational activity each person, staff or students, governors or parents, will have a different interpretation. Although people may be willing to work in certain groups for much of the time, be it in a subject area, or key stage area in primary school, or in a class, their choice of membership is provisional and conditional. It is based on each person's willingness to remain part of that group, even when the formal opportunities for leaving it are limited. At those points when people (students or staff) cannot leave a group physically, perhaps for reasons of legal contract or social pressure, they may find other ways of resisting being part of its actions (see, for example, Wolcott, 1977; Plant, 1987) or becoming disaffected (e.g. Willis, 1977).

At the interface of student and teacher values, conflicts and homogeneities emerge as teachers struggle to implement national policies for schooling and students try to implement what they perceive as their learning needs. Teachers use a variety of strategies that try to take account of the students involved and the attitudes they hold, including trying to take account of the influence of the social and home backgrounds from which students come. This raises questions about how the values promoted by senior staff to staff and parents are translated into relationships in the classrooms between teachers and students.

Subject leaders stand crucially at this interface between the whole-school domain and that of the classroom. How they work with their colleagues and with the students in their subject areas will strongly help to shape the cultures of those areas. If the cultures they construct are dysfunctional, people in the subject area will not be helped to meet its purposes or those of the school. Staff in such cultures may be isolated from each other, not working as effective teams. Senior and middle-ranking staff are unlikely to be successful in helping their colleagues meet the challenges of the shifting external environment. Power is likely to be used to stifle initiatives, rather than to support and encourage change. Staff, parents and governors are likely to hold

negative views of each other and staff are likely to undertake whatever strategies they can to minimise the other parties' influences on school processes. Consequently staff, pupils and parents are likely to be pursuing their own individual educational interests, values and beliefs rather than trying to discover common ones that address the needs of the students.

On the other hand people in effective schools and subject areas are likely to be part of, and help to generate, a very different culture (Sammons *et al.*, 1997; Harris, 1998; Stoll and Fink, 1998). In creating these cultures leaders at whole-school and middle level, including subject leaders, play a key role.

A conceptual framework

In hierarchical terms subject leaders are middle managers in schools and colleges. They are not part of the senior management team, responsible for the overall strategic development of a school, but are responsible for the operational work of others, namely, classroom teachers. Site supervisors and senior office administrators might, along with heads of academic and pastoral departments in secondary schools, also be classed as middle managers. These, too, are operationally responsible for overseeing and developing the work of their colleagues.

In schools these organisational hierarchical distinctions are not neatly delineated. Many staff will be involved in a complex switching of roles and lines of accountability between different aspects of their work. For example, in secondary schools most teachers will be responsible to both academic and pastoral heads of department for different aspects of their work. The demands of these two arenas can, potentially, be in conflict. Heads of academic departments will also be classroom teachers in their own or other subject areas. Heads of pastoral departments will work in subject areas and be accountable to academic heads of department. Indeed, senior staff will also work in classrooms and be accountable for this aspect of their work to middle managers.

Within this complex matrix of leadership and accountability, subject leaders are increasingly acknowledged to be key figures. Early research into the role of heads of department (e.g. Bailey, 1973; Busher, 1988; Earley and Fletcher-Campbell, 1989) was concerned with the responsibilities and time pressures upon them. Busher (1988) discussed how delegation of responsibilities led to staff development within a department. Most recently, attention has turned towards the leadership role of the head of department and relationship between departmental leader-

ship and the differential performance of departments (Bennett, 1995; Harris *et al.*, 1995; Sammons *et al.*, 1997; Harris, 1998).

Busher and Harris (1999) identified five dimensions of the subject leader's work. These are represented in Table 1.1

Table 1.1 Dimensions of a subject leader's role

Role	Responsibilities
Bridging or brokering	Transactional leadership with senior staff and colleagues
Creating social cohesion	Transformational leadership to create a shared vision and collegial culture
Mentoring	Improving staff and student performance
Creating professional networks	Liaison with public examination and subject knowledge associations; knowledge of changing government policy; liaison with local authority support and parents
Using power	Expert; referent; reward; coercion; legitimate

The first dimension emphasises negotiation. It concerns the way in which subject leaders translate the perspectives and policies of senior staff into the practices of individual classrooms, as well as representing the views of their subject colleagues to senior staff and other colleagues (Busher, 1992). This bridging or brokering function, although perceived by the TTA (1998) and OFSTED as only one of the functions of subject leaders, remains a central responsibility. It implies a transactional leadership role for the subject leader. In this role, subject leaders make use of power – usually power over others (Blase and Anderson, 1995) – to attempt to secure working agreements with colleagues about how to achieve school and subject area goals and practices. Part of this role is the managing and allocating of resources available to a subject area, which in England and Wales is largely determined by the number of students taught a particular subject.

The second dimension emphasises group social processes. It focuses on how subject leaders encourage a group of staff to develop a group identity. This relates to the culture subject leaders create in their areas. The area, or areas, of subject knowledge the staff share usually defines the boundaries of the group in a secondary school. In primary schools it is more complex since every class teacher usually teaches every subject. There, the unit of social cohesion is likely to be the key stage area of the National Curriculum within which a teacher's class is

situated. Glover *et al.* (1998) and Harris (1998) suggested that more effective subject areas have a sense of collegiality fostered by subject leaders helping colleagues in the area to shape and establish a shared vision of successful practice. This necessarily implies a leadership style that is people orientated and empowers others. It involves subject leaders using power with or power through other people to generate collaborative departmental cultures (Blase and Anderson, 1995). This style of leadership is termed 'transformational' and helps other people to alter their feelings, attitudes and beliefs, as well as coping with the organisational structures within which they work.

A third dimension focuses on individual people: on how subject leaders bring about the improvement of staff and student performances. At one level this implies a transactional leadership role for subject leaders, monitoring the attainment of school goals and helping staff and students meet particular prescribed levels of curriculum performance. On the other hand, as Glover *et al.* (1998) note, it suggests an important mentoring, or supervisory leadership role in supporting colleagues' development and the development of students academically and socially. In part this requires subject leaders to develop their skills in helping staff to reflect critically and communally on their practice (Smyth, 1991; Hopkins *et al.*, 1997b; Moyles *et al.*, 1998). In part it requires subject leaders to draw on their expert knowledge as well as their referent power to bring about improvement in practice (French and Raven, 1968).

A fourth dimension is oriented to the professional environment. It requires subject leaders to be in touch with a variety of actors and agencies in the external environment of a school and to negotiate, where necessary, on behalf of the other members of the department (Busher, 1988; 1992). For example, subject leaders need to keep in touch with the changing demands of National Curriculum and assessment policies in order to help their colleagues to be aware of these. In secondary schools this will include being aware of changes and guidance in public examination board syllabuses for Year 11 students. Other aspects of liaison might be with local curriculum development groups of teachers (Busher and Hodgkinson, 1996); with national professional associations for particular subjects to be aware of changing thinking on particular topics; or with local business for a variety of resources to enhance the learning opportunities of students.

These four dimensions of the leadership role of subject leaders are both complementary and potentially competing in their demands. They are linked together through a fifth dimension: the way in which subject leaders use power within and through particular organisational structures. They are made more complex because subject areas

vary in size, configuration, status, resource power and staff expertise making the job of each subject leader contextually different from that of every other one. The different possible organisational structures for subject areas within schools are summarised in Table 1.2 and are discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Table 1.2 Five different structures of subject areas – a typology

Area	Characteristics
Federal	Multi-subject; large (numbers of staff, rooms, budget); strong centre with integrated subdomains (e.g. science faculty in a secondary school; key stage area in a primary school)
Confederate	Similar to federal, but a weak centre; subdomains hold key power and collaborate (or not) over resources; ‘an administrative convenience’
Unitary	Single subject but large (numbers of staff, rooms, budget); leadership and management functions can be shared corporately by members
Impacted	Single subject; small (numbers of staff, rooms, budget); can form part of federal departments or be free standing
Diffuse	Single subject or focus; taught across subject areas/most classrooms; small/large combination (taught in one room by many teachers or in many rooms, sometimes by one teacher only)

Source: Busher and Harris, 1999.

The structure and argument of the book

This book is divided into four parts that reflect the four key areas of subject leaders’ work outlined in the National Standards for Subject Leaders (TTA, 1998):

- 1) Strategic direction and development of the subject.
- 2) Teaching and learning.
- 3) Leading and managing staff.
- 4) Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources.

Aspects of these four areas are discussed in the subsequent chapters of this book with particular reference to improving primary and secondary schools in England and Wales.

Part I: Strategic direction and development of the subject area

This part considers how subject leaders can bring about change within the context of different organisational structures. Chapters in this part focus upon the different school organisational and subject area of

relationship taken and how subject leaders manage their subject areas. The chapters review the implications of the three main types of subject area – unitary, federal, and diffuse – for the work of subject leaders.

A key concept within Chapter 2 by Alma Harris is how change and improvement can be brought about in organisational contexts. The tension for subject leaders between developing their own subject areas and meeting the changing demands of external change is investigated and discussed.

Chapter 3 by Christine Wise continues the theme of tensions by recognising that, in some cases, these can be generated within subject areas because of the different agenda of different members of staff. How these tensions are managed to improve the quality of teaching and learning is addressed through an exploration of federal and confederate departments within secondary schools.

Chapter 4 by Hugh Busher considers the problems subject leaders encounter in trying to develop their subject areas when their subject involves a large number of academic staff in a school. This type of subject area is described as diffuse. In primary schools, where most teachers teach all the subjects in the National Curriculum in England and Wales, this is a particular issue. Within secondary schools the delivery of cross-curriculum skills, such as information and communication technology (ICT), or support, such as special educational needs (SEN), are examples of diffuse subject areas.

Part II: Teaching and learning

At the core of any successful subject area and, therefore, at the heart of the work of subject leaders is how successfully students learn. Part II addresses this challenge by first considering, in Chapter 5 by Christine Wise, how successful subject leaders need, themselves, to be aware of what constitutes effective teaching and learning. This is not merely a matter of knowing technically how to structure a syllabus and assess the learning outcomes from it, but also of understanding how teaching and learning within a subject area can be enhanced and improved.

To deliver a subject successfully to all pupils in a school, subject leaders have to work with other staff. Chapter 6 by Alma Harris discusses this aspect and considers how subject leaders may help their colleagues to evaluate and develop their repertoire of teaching strategies. This process involves extending teachers' classroom skills and contributes to the building of a rigorous reflection on practice.

Chapter 7 by Hugh Busher explores the importance of subject leaders working effectively to build strong and positive links with the parents and local communities from which their students come. The

chapter considers the benefits to subject areas of developing such links.

Part III: Leading and managing staff

Just as the core business of any subject area is the effective implementation of teaching to bring about successful student learning, so the key means of achieving that is through the successful leadership and management of staff. This means subject leaders have to develop and help teams of staff to work effectively within their organisational contexts. Chapter 8 by Hugh Busher explores the management of subject areas in relation to general leadership within a school from the senior management team. This is balanced by a consideration of how subject leaders can create and sustain an effective team within their subject area.

An important element in the building and maintenance of teams is the quality of interpersonal relationships subject leaders help to create. Chapter 9 by Hugh Busher discusses how the values and beliefs subject leaders hold as part of their professional identity impinge on the constructed cultures of subject areas. As these cultures are jointly constructed by subject leaders and their colleagues, the chapter also discusses how subject leaders might work with colleagues to create effective or healthy cultures.

Working with academic colleagues successfully also involves subject leaders in helping them to develop their skills as effective teachers. Chapter 10 by Alma Harris considers how subject leaders can use processes of review and observation of practice to help colleagues reflect upon their work and to improve it. The chapter considers action research as a key way of promoting professional development within the subject area.

Part IV: Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources

In managing their subject areas subject leaders need to bring about change by using physical and financial resources. This part deals with resources, including the support staff of a school as a resource for teachers in supporting the curriculum. It also discusses how subject leaders can use physical and financial resources effectively to sustain a curriculum. Chapter 11 by Hugh Busher considers the processes and pitfalls of development planning and how these are linked to budgetary decisions. Such decisions inevitably involve subject leaders and their colleagues in trying to create the optimum mix of resources